

Effective Communication: From Winning Idea to Wall Street

**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)**

by

Jenna James

**Thesis Advisor**

Dr. Joseph Misiewicz

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Misiewicz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent than the middle name.

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### Abstract

Since the beginning of man, storytelling has been a fundamental building block in the way human beings communicate. From writing on cave walls, to the telegraph, to the iPhone, we have evolved from basic drawings to higher technological methods of sending and receiving messages. This reflective piece examines the dos and don'ts of effective communication through analysis of "The Future of Communication and Public Relations" video that won me Business Wire's College Video Contest along with other great communication techniques.

### Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank Jessica Lueck for her creation of the Business Wire College Video Contest and for giving me the opportunity to share my story on the future of communication and public relations with the world.

My final thank you goes to Business Wire and Warren Buffett who agreed to work with Jessica's idea and give this student from Indiana a chance to shine.

## **Effective Communication: From Winning Idea to Wall Street**

The whole experience felt like a dream—winning the contest, having interview after interview to talk about my success, and dining with the billionaire himself. Even now, months after the big day, it still feels like a story I only imagined. The entire event was a whirlwind of press releases, fancy food, and important people and as I was ushered from one place to the next I had to pinch myself and say, “Remember this moment.” It all started when my cousin told me that the company Business Wire was holding a video contest for college students to talk about the future of communication and public relations. With a little bit of gumption and confidence, plus a lot of planning on how best to convey a winning idea about the future of communication, I began working on a project that would be a defining moment in my life.

From the beginning, I knew I wanted to make a visually appealing video. I drew inspiration from the RSA (The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce) videos and the video “What is a Trader?” by Brian Mosley from RightNow.org on YouTube. These videos both employ the technique of accelerating drawings done by hand accompanied by voiceover narration. RSA Animator Andrew Park says the RSA series makes learning look so appealing because “people like to see the process of creation” (Parker Online). The visual aspect was extremely important in order to reach those who are visual learners. Showing how ideas are connected and reinforcing the audible information through visual drawings helped make a topic that could be confusing understandable (Inspiration Online).

Another important aspect of this video project was holding the viewer's attention. This task is becoming increasingly difficult as we spend more time in a digital world. Though Internet users spend a lot of time on sites like YouTube, they do not actually watch very many videos through to completion. It is the same principal as those who flip through TV channels. "The longer any particular video runs, the less likely they are to watch the whole thing" (Kafka Online). Video-tracking service TubeMogul found that about 90% of the average Web video watchers give a clip ten seconds before deciding whether to continue watching or move on. By the time the clip has reached 60 seconds, over half of the viewers have stopped watching (Kafka Online). Providing an interesting storyline, complemented by creative animation, was essential in gaining and maintaining viewership.

In order to create a video that was better looking than my competitors', I had to keep in mind several technical details. Knowing the video would likely be uploaded to Facebook and embedded in an electronic press release, I produced for those mediums. Videos that are made for a television screen will not necessarily render appropriately on a computer screen, and visa versa (Miller 106). I took into consideration the small size of the window on which viewers would be watching and compensated by making my drawings larger. This process involved trial and error and required several takes to determine what size and how complex the drawings needed to be.

Though the winner was not chosen based on the number of views or comments, it was essential to create a video that stood out from the pack. In the

book *YouTube and Video Marketing an Hour a Day*, Greg Jarboe explains the importance of avoiding visual banality. “If you want viewers to pay attention to your video, show them something they have never seen before” (Jarboe 134). This key element drew attention to my video. Though RSA Animate and the Trader video already used this idea to communicate their messages, the technique was not widespread. There are many people who had never seen this concept, and therefore, they were viewing my video through fresh eyes. In essence, I took a good idea that wasn’t well known and added my own flair to express my ideas.

Many people have asked me from where my ideas come. Before beginning work on producing the video, I had to research the history of communication in order to be able to craft a narrative. Jarboe explains, “If you want your video to be understood, then you had better make it crystal clear” (Jarboe 129). If I wanted other people to understand communication, I had to first understand it myself. I listened to podcasts, read articles, and watched video lectures to gather information. I also used material I had learned in some of my classes that pertained to the topic. As a telecommunications major, I feel that Ball State has done an excellent job of bringing in guest speakers to talk about various topics in the field of communication. One in particular, Dale Herigstad’s message, really resonated with me, and I ended up using several ideas from his lecture on interactive design in my video. While at Ball State, Herigstad spoke about the future of media consumption and walked students through his unique

spatial context approach to designing advanced navigation systems for interactive TV and connected screens.

Once I was well-versed in the ins and outs of communication and public relations, I started planning. The first hurdle was to identify my audience. I decided to focus on making a video applicable to most audiences. I also focused on making it simple so that even my grandparents would be able to understand the general idea. For the contest many businessmen and women and CEO's would be viewing and evaluating my work, but the topic of communication spans all ages, genders, and walks of life. When watching a video, every member in the audience will ask "what is in this for me?" or "how does this apply to me?" Fortunately, this did not raise any issues because everyone communicates in some form or another.

Next, I identified my objective by asking myself "Why am I presenting this?" My answer went further than educating others about the future of communication and public relations; it also pointed out the need to embrace change. I wanted the audience to come away realizing that change is inevitable and that it does not have to be viewed negatively, but in fact, can lead to great advancements and innovations. After identifying my audience and objective, I came up with a strategy to state my purpose, support my claims, and summarize my message.

The narrative was the foundation for the rest of the project. If it felt unorganized and jumbled, the viewer would not be able to connect to the visual story. It was essential that I craft a script that flowed together logically and was

pleasant to hear. After gathering my information, the majority of my time was spent organizing, writing, and rewriting what I wanted to say. In *Effective Business Communications*, Murphy and Hildebrandt emphasize the seven C's: completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clearness, courteousness, and correctness (Murphy, 1997). During the rewriting phase, I tried to follow these guidelines by using the appropriate level of language, being clear and conversational, using effective transitions, and covering all my bases.

The beginning of the video grabs the viewer's attention with a quote by John F. Kennedy. "For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future" (John F. Kennedy, 1967). This quote fit perfectly with the main point of the video and gave the viewers three concepts to which they could personally relate—time, the world, and change. "If you can establish common ground, especially at the opening of a message, you can often make your audience more receptive" (Blalock Online). It also offsets the stage for ultimately bringing the video full circle. The middle portion gives viewers a short history of communication, reinforces the need to look to the future, and provides examples of new technologies and forms of communication on the horizon. By starting and finishing with the image of the world and the idea of being connected to each other through communication, the message feels complete.

Looking back on the project now that it is complete, there are a few areas I would have liked to improve if I had been given more time. After finding out about the contest this past summer, I only had a week to complete the video before it

was due. Though I spent a significant amount of time preparing the script, my drawings were not planned out. I literally sat down with the script, pressed record, and began sketching. My first attempt included a bust of John F. Kennedy to coordinate with the beginning quote. In the end, however, I omitted that drawing because the rest of the sketches were not of the same caliber, making his image seem out of place. I would have liked to have spent more time deciding what to draw and making the visuals more intricate and detailed. I also should have enhanced the coloring in postproduction to render the overall video brighter with a little higher contrast. As it is when compared to other similar videos, the coloring looks a bit dull and washed out. My last change would be to rerecord the voiceover with a professional microphone rather than the internal microphone on my computer. At the time it was all I had available and although it got the job done, it definitely did not provide best sound quality. That being said, despite time constraints, I was able to buckle down and produce a winning video with limited resources within a few days.

This opportunity has not only opened a lot of doors for me, but has also expanded my knowledge in the field of telecommunications. As a result of all my research on communication, I feel better equipped to express my ideas and connect with an audience. The national recognition has also given me confidence in myself and my work that I did not have before. It is important for students to challenge themselves and step out of their comfort zones to grow personally as well as in their fields of study. By trusting my instincts and trying to present something new, I was able to meet and have lunch with one of the wealthiest



men in the world. I left New York City with an invitation to the next Berkshire Hathaway annual meeting, memories that will last a lifetime, and this picture.



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